



**St. Vincent commits
the Rule of the Union
to Mary,
Queen of Apostles**

“The Patroness of the Union is the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Apostles, perfect model of both the spiritual and apostolic life” (General Statutes, Art. 3).

When I first agreed to write this reflection, I was tempted, as so many busy people are, to get it written ahead of time and set aside a neat little package, ready to bring to our meeting. I resisted this impulse however, and instead, decided to spend some time just thinking about Mary and how her life unfolded.

We often hear the advice, “Think of Mary”, particularly when we have some difficulty or trial to face. We cast our thoughts over the life of Mary, perhaps lingering on one or two of her most difficult moments, but do we really think of her?

We tend to look on her life as a finished package, much in the same way we look at a movie we’ve already seen. We know how it ends and so the suspense and tension we experienced the first time we saw it no longer have the same effect.

Do we also look at the life of Mary as a story that unfolded over 2000 years ago? We know most of the events—the joys, the sorrows, the laughter, the tears and the suffering but, despite the many real hardships she faced, we already know the ending. Does this story, too, lose its effect?

Mary experienced the very real fear and anguish of the events of her life. She didn’t know the outcome as we do now. What must she have felt as she faced the prospect of a pregnancy that no one understood, the birth of Jesus in a cold, unfamiliar place with no creature comforts, the prophecy of Simeon, uprooting to

live in exile in a foreign land, the obvious (and maybe not so obvious) difficulties of living in poverty at that time, the anxiety she and Joseph experienced as they searched for Jesus, the death of Joseph, her beloved husband and constant companion, the years of her Son's ministry, culminating in his bitter and brutal suffering and death and, finally, being left in the care of the beloved disciple, John. Although she, no doubt, was well cared for, think how she must have missed Joseph and Jesus.

In all of these situations, she showed complete trust in God. When the angel Gabriel first announced to her the birth of Jesus, her initial apprehension was evident in her response, "How can this be?" It was only when she heard that the message was coming from God that she gave her consent, despite not fully understanding or foreseeing the consequences.

In looking more deeply into the life of Mary, we can see how close she really is to each one of us. Whether through the married or single life, celibacy, virginity, motherhood, widowhood, the loss of a child, even temporarily, and eventually in death, she has experienced it all. She can identify with any or all of these situations, drawing her close to each one of us, no matter where our individual lives may take us—even if it's to the Vatican!

Benedict XVI affirms his trust in Mary's protection when, from the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica, among his first words as pope he says with confidence, "The Lord will help us and Mary, His very Holy Mother, stands by us".

Vincent Pallotti was wise in choosing Mary as the patroness of the Union of Catholic Apostolate since, even at a young age, he recognized her as his Mother. When he was only three years old, he threw himself at the feet of Our Lady, exclaiming, "Dear Mother, make me a good boy".

These simple but profound words of a child were the beginning of a life of complete confidence in Mary's loving protection. He leaves us with the sage advice, "Entrust yourselves to the Blessed Mother. She wishes to remain with you always."

Perhaps we truly take this advice when, in times of uncertainty, we do as Mary so often did and ponder these things in our hearts.

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Although Mary was neither a priest nor one of the twelve apostles, she dedicated herself with such perfection to the work of charity and zeal that the Church accords her the august title of Queen of Apostles not merely as an honor but because she fully merits this title.

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